

217
A
SERMON

Preached before the
Incorporated SOCIETY
FOR THE
*Propagation of the Gospel in
Foreign Parts;*

AT THEIR
ANNIVERSARY MEETING
IN THE
Parish-Church of St Mary-le-Bow,
On Friday the 20th of February, 1719.

By ZACHARY PEARCE, D. D.
Vicar of St. Martin's in the Fields, and Chaplain in
Ordinary to His Majesty.

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February 20. 1729.

*At the Anniversary Meeting of the Society
for the Propagation of the Gospel in
Foreign Parts.*

A G R E E D, That the Thanks of
the SOCIETY be given to the
Reverend Dr. *Pearce*, for his Ser-
mon Preached this Day before the
SOCIETY: And that he be desired to
Print the same.



David Humphreys,
Secretary.



ISAIAH xlix 6.

*It is a light Thing, that thou
shouldest be my Servant to raise
up the Tribes of Jacob, and to
restore the Preserved of Israel :
I will also give thee for a Light
to the Gentiles, that thou mayest
be my Salvation unto the End
of the Earth.*



THESE Words are a Part of
a very remarkable Prophecy,
concerning some Deliverance
and Salvation to be effected,
not for the *Jews* only, but for the *Gentiles*,
for no less than all the Nations of the
Earth : and Expressions of the like Import

are frequently met with in almost all the Prophetical Books, tho' no one of the Prophets enters so often into this great Subject, and dwells so long upon it, as *Isaiab* is observed to do.

ALL Christians, and generally all *Jews*, acknowledge, that the Prophecies of this Sort relate to the Kingdom of the *Messiah*; the only Point in Dispute between them is, Whether the Kingdom thus foretold, was to be a Temporal, or a Spiritual one.

AND it must be confessed, that the Prophets often describe the *Messiah*, under the Character of a *Ruler*, a *Prince*, and a *King*: *David* and *Isaiab* do this more remarkably than the rest; and it is not to be wondred at, that they dealt much in such high-sounding Titles, since the one was himself a *King*, and the other of the *Royal House of Judah*.

BUT still the Prophets don't forget to let us see by evident Marks what sort of *King* the *Messiah* was to be, and what the Nature of that Deliverance or Salvation, which he was to bring about.

Isa. xi. 9. IN his Reign, *the Earth was to be full of the Knowledge of the Lord*; all
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for Propagation of the Gospel, &c 5

Nations were to speak a pure Language, that they might all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve him with one Consent: Religion therefore was to be one great End of the Messiah's Dominion; a Religion to be spread universally over the World, which the Jewish Religion, in the Nature of it, could not be: A New Covenant was to be made with the House of Israel, and for that purpose a Law was to go forth out of Sion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Nor was this Law, like that which was given in the Wilderness, a Ceremonial one, but it was to be put in their inward Parts, and written in their Hearts: the Consequence of which was to be, that the former or Jewish Religion was no longer to take Place; for out of the Gentiles Men were to be taken for Priests and for Levites, contrary to the Mosaick Institution: and, what was still more inconsistent with the established Worship of the Jews or their Profelytes, under this New Law, in every Place Incense was to be offered up unto the Lord, and a pure Offering: the general Effect of all which was to be, that their Iniquity

Zeph. iii. 9.
Jer. xxxi. 33.
Isa. ii. 2.
Jer. xxxi. 33.
Isa. lxvi. 21.
Malachi i. 11.
Jer. xxxi. 34.

quity was to be forgiven, and their Sins remembred no more.

WHAT then can all these Particulars point out but the Gospel ? it is this alone, which answers the Description ; and to suppose that no more is meant by these full and comprehensive Expressions, than the solemnizing a Passover under *Hezechias*, or the Restoration of the *Jews* from Captivity, or the coming of many Profelytes into their Religion, is to play with the Sense of Words, and to give them a forced, as well as a false Interpretation.

THESE Prophecies were understood of the Gospel and its Effects, by the Writers of the New Testament, to whom the same Spirit of GOD explained them, that at first dictated them : this of the Text particularly is thus applied by the Apostle *St. Paul* in *Acts* xiii. 47. who, when the *Jews* at *Antioch* rejected his Doctrine, said, *Lo ! we turn to the Gentiles, for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a Light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for Salvation unto the End of the Earth.*

for Propagation of the Gospel, &c. 7

WE see then, that the Prophecy in the Text, as well as others of the like Nature, looks forward towards the Gospel, which *in the Fulness of Time* appeared in the World; and this being premised, the Subject of the ensuing Discourse shall be to shew these three Things.

I. THAT the declared Design of Providence is, that the Gospel of *Christ* or the *Messiah*, should be preached and received in all the Nations of the World, *unto the End of the Earth*.

II. THAT this Design of Providence was not effected in the Days of the Apostles, or in any of the Ages which have succeeded them: And

III. THAT therefore, since we know what the Design of GOD is, and that it has not yet been accomplished, it is every Christian's Duty to forward the Work, and contribute towards it; especially when a Door is opened, and Opportunity is offered for propagating the Christian Faith.

AND

AND this will naturally lead me to make an Application of the whole, to the Occasion of our Meeting, and to the particular Business and Employment of this Society.

I. TO begin with the first Head, and shew that the declared Design of Providence, &c.

AND here it may be remark'd, how large and comprehensive the Expressions are which the Prophets make Use of on this Occasion; how various the Phrases, and how general the Extent of all of them: no Exceptions or Limitations are any where found, and the whole Force of the *Jewish* Language seems spent in the Recital of them: *All People*, and *all*

(a) *Isa.* *Flesh*, all (a) *Nations and Tongues*, (b) *all*
 lxvi. 18. (b) *Zep.* *the Isles of the Heathen*, (c) *all that are*
 ii. 11. (c) *Aff.* *afar off*, (d) *the Abundance of the Sea*,
 ii. 39. (d) *Isa.* *the Forces of the Gentiles*, (e) *from Sea to*
 lx. 5. *Sea*, (f) *and from the rising up of the Sun*
 (e) *Zech.* *unto its going down*, and (as in the Text)
 ix. 10. (f) *Mal.* *Salvation unto the End of the Earth*; these
 i. 11. and the like Marks of Universality are the constant Stile of the Prophets, when this glorious Subject is in their View.

BUT

BUT still it must be confessed, that from the Expressions alone, us'd in such pompous Tongues as the Eastern are, it cannot be concluded for a Certain, that they must be understood in the widest Sense of them: The Prophetick Stile is too well known, to make it necessary to take all that is said without abatement made for the Flight of his Metaphors and Boldness of its Figures: We shall see some Proofs of this under the Second Head of my Discourse: at present it may be observ'd, that by the help of some other Considerations the Point may be clear'd up, and the Meaning of these Prophecies may be shewn to be a Strict and Literal one; for that Demonstration, which the Words themselves don't afford us, may be had from the Circumstances of the Deliverer, and from the Nature of the Gospel or Salvation.

Christ, by taking the Human Nature upon him, became equally related to All Mankind, *all Nations being made of one* Acts xvii. 26. *Blood*, as the Apostle expresses it: tho' born a *Jew*, yet in the Flesh he was allied to the whole Human Race; and therefore the Presumption is pretty strong,

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that

that All, who had a share in his Nature, were to have a share in his Message too.

HOWEVER, the same thing may be more certainly concluded from the Nature of the Gospel or Salvation which he brought, from its being of equal Use and Concernment for All Nations and Persons as for Any: Say, why it was sent into the World, unless because it was wanted; and then assign a Reason (if you can,) why the Blessing should be confin'd to some part of the World only: This Nation may probably be Wickeder than That; but *Remission of Sins* (which the Gospel proclaims) is what every Nation, the least corrupted in Belief or Practice, stands in need of: and surely no Distinction could ever be design'd by GOD, where Nature's Cry for Help was one and the same: this would but ill suit with the Character which the Scriptures give

Rom. ii. of him, that he is no Respector of Persons, and that he is not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also.

FROM these Considerations therefore it may be gather'd, that all the Expressions, which declare that the Gospel is to be preached to and received by all Nations,
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are to be Literally and Strictly understood: I proceed now to

II. THE second Head, which was to shew, that this Design of Providence was not effected in the Days of the Apostles, or in any of the Ages which have succeeded them.

AND for this there is a very obvious Reason: some well-inhabited Parts of the World were then Unknown, particularly the vast Tract of *America*, not discover'd till about 200 Years ago: and if the sound of the Gospel had not gone forth into any Part of this New World, before the Way was so lately open'd to it from *Europe*, we know what Progress it has made there since, and how many Nations of that spacious Continent have never yet had CHRIST preached unto them.

THE Truth is, that as the Preaching of the Gospel is to be Universal, so is the Time too for doing it; as no Limits are set in the first Case, so no Period is assign'd in the latter. Nor can the Divine Goodness be called in Question upon this account: for the Scriptures always speak of the Gospel as the *Free-Gift* of God; and what Nation, or Person can

justly complain, unless debar'd of some Right? And what Right has any one to a *Free-Gift*? Those, who think it hard to account, why Some Nations should be brought so much later into the Gospel than others were, would do well to remember, how much later All Nations came into the Knowledge of the True God than the *Jews* did: if God's Behaviour may be censur'd as Partial in the one Case, it must be so in the other: But there is nothing in this whole Procedure, which cannot be sufficiently and clearly justified: It is enough, that sooner or later all Nations are to *see the Salvation of God*; but *the Times and the Seasons* of it *God hath put in his own Power*, as best knowing when a Kingdom is prepared for the Reception of his Favours; and when the Human means, which he chooses to make use of, may be best made Subservient and Instrumental to his Purpose.

It must be acknowledged however, that the Ancient Christian Writers generally believed, that the Apostles, before their Separation, divided the several Parts of the World between them, and that each

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each took his distinct Portion for preaching the Gospel in; from whence some have seriously maintain'd, that every Part of the whole Earth (even *America* it self, tho' then Unknown to the rest of Mankind) had the Knowledge of CHRIST communicated to it by the Labour of some one or other of the Apostles.

AND for this Opinion some Passages of the New Testament are produced, which speak indeed at large, and seem at first sight to give it Countenance : such is *Christ's* Command to his Disciples, when he was ascending, that they should go ^{Matt. xxviii. 19.} *and teach all Nations* ; that they should ^{Mark xvi. 15.} *go into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature.*

To which they add, that he fix'd the Time for the accomplishment of it, when he said, *This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the World, for a* ^{Matt. xxiv. 14.} *Witness unto all Nations, and then shall the time come, i. e. then, not till then, shall be the End of the Jewish State.*

AND they put us in mind, that accordingly the Apostles are said to have *gone forth and preached every where* ; ^{Mark xvi. 20.} and that when *St. Paul wrote to the Col-*
lof-

Coloss. i. 6. *lossians, the Gospel was gone out into*
 Coloss. i. *all the World, nay, that it was preached*
 23. *unto every Creature under Heaven.*

BUT notwithstanding the seeming Comprehensiveness of these several Expressions, it may be shewn, First, that the Notion of the Gospel's having been Then preached to all Nations without Exception, is not supported by the New Testament, but is rather refuted by it; and Secondly, that the Nature of the thing and its Circumstances make very strongly against this Notion, and prove it to be in the highest degree improbable.

1. The abovemention'd Passages of Holy Scripture, if taken in the strictest Sense, speak more than even the Supporters of this Opinion would have us understand by them; for then we must believe that the Apostles preached not only to every Nation, but to every single Person in every Nation under Heaven: Some allowance therefore *must* be made; and if we compare these Expressions with others of the like Nature in the New Testament, we shall find our selves justify'd

stify'd in giving a more restrained Sense to them.

WHEN our Saviour first sent out his Apostles, in his Life-time, he commanded them *not to go into the way of the* Mark x. 5. *Gentiles or Nations, but rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.* Whereas, when he was about to ascend up into Heaven, the Commission, which he gave them, was more Extensive and General; that they should go and preach not only to the *Jews*, but to the *Gentiles* or *Nations* also: in this View he seems to have said to them, *Go and teach all Nations, go into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature.* And in this sense too it is most probable, that St. Paul said *the Gospel was gone out into all the World, and was preached unto every Creature under Heaven:* the Expressions implying no Absolute Universality, but only an Opposition to such a Limitedness or Partiality as before confin'd the preaching of the Gospel to the Jewish People. In this View of the matter, we can easily see how *the End* of the Jewish State did *not come*, till the Gospel had been *preached in all the World, and to all Nations,*

tions, as our Saviour foretold: for it was publish'd at first in *Judea*, from whence it spread to *Samaria*, and other Parts where the *Jews* dwelt; the Apostles having for many Years confin'd their Preaching to Them and their Profelytes: till at last about fourteen Years after the Death of *Christ*, *St. Paul*, by the Direction of the Holy Ghost, began to apply himself to the *Gentiles*, and to call them into the Faith, as Heirs of Salvation in common with the *Jews*.

If this Sense be not approv'd, yet it is well known that in the Language of Sacred and of prophane Authors, (a) every great Empire is called *the whole World*, the ἡ γῆ οἰκουμένη: particularly the (b) *Roman* Empire was honour'd with this Name, the

(a) So in *Isai.* xiii. 5. and xiv. 26. the Destruction of *Babylon* or the *Assyrian* is express'd by the LXX as the Destruction πάσης τῆς οἰκουμένης, of *Assyria* and its Empire only, not of the *whole World*, for *Palestina* is commanded to rejoyce on that occasion. v. 29.

(b) Hence came the Expression, *Oecumenical Councils*: see also *Josephus de Bell. Jud.* l. 2. c. 16. Edit. Hudson. where King *Agrippa* speaks to the *Jews* in these Words: Ἡ δ' ἐκείνων (Ρωμαίων) ἰχὺς διὰ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀνικηθῆ. μάλλον δὲ καὶ ταύτης ἐξήπισάν τι πλέον· ἢ ὃ ἐξήρκεσεν αὐτοῖς ὅλη· Εὐφράτης ὑπὸ πῖν ἀναπλήν ——— ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ὠκεανὸν ἐλθὼν ἐξήλησαν οἰκουμένην, καὶ μέλει τῶν ἀντιστήτων

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the usual Title of it being *Imperium orbis Terrarum*: and therefore no more may be meant here, than that the Gospel was preached over the *Roman* Empire; over the Greatest Part of it, tho' not perhaps in strictness of Speech over every Part of even that Limited Space: for in the New Testament we find *the whole World* spoken of, tho' even a Part only of the *Roman* Empire, probably no more than (a) *Judea* is intended; as when *Agabus* signified by the Spirit, that there should be great Dearth thro' all the world, which came to pass in the days of *Claudius* *Cesar*, it is not Unlikely that this Famine happen'd only or chiefly in *Judea*, for in the next verse no mention is made of any Relief sent but to the Brethren in *Judea*, and (b) *Josephus* speaks of a great

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one

τοῦ ῥήτου Βρεττανῶν διήνεγκαν τὰ ὅπλα: where it is observable, that the *Roman* Empire is called the ἡ οἰκουμένη, and that *Britain*, while unconquered, was not look'd upon as Part of it, but as a distinct *World*.

(a) Of the like Nature is that Expression of *Josephus*, which we meet with in his *Antiq.* Book 1. ch. 19. where, introducing God as promising the Land of *Canaan* to *Jacob's* Posterity, he makes him say, *ὅτι πληράσσει πᾶσαν, ὅταν ἡλιθία, καὶ γῆν καὶ θάλατταν.*

(b) Ἐπὶ τέτοιοις δὴ καὶ τὸν μέγαν λιμὸν κατὰ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν συνέβη γενέσθαι. *Antiq. Jud.* l. 20. c. 4.

one raging there in the Reign of *Claudius*, without taking any Notice of its being felt else-where: this however is remarkable, that the Disciples at *Antioch*, who
Ver. 29. are said to have *determin'd every Man according to his Ability to send Relief unto the Brethren in Judea*, seem not to have look'd upon their Country as any Part of *all that World*, which was to labour under the Calamity.

And however General St. *Paul's* Expression may appear, when he says that *the Gospel was preached unto every Creature under Heaven*, yet there is no need to understand it as unlimited by any Exception; for in *Act. ii. 5.* it is said in as Comprehensive terms that *there were dwelling (or rather sojourning) at Jerusalem devout Men, out of every Nation under Heaven*: and yet that there were no *Americans* there, we may be Sure for very obvious Reasons.

It is well known from Scripture, that the Gospel by the Ministry of the Apostles spread it self very widely; and there is no doubt, but that in most Parts of the *Roman Empire*, perhaps in some Countries beyond the Extent of it, the Doctrine
of

of *Christ* was carried by Them or their Contemporaries: But that there was no *Creature*, or even *Nation under Heaven* (strictly speaking,) where it was Unheard of, when St. *Paul* wrote to the *Colossians*, seems refuted by the two following Observations. The one, that after this Epistle to the *Colossians* was written, St. *Paul* recover'd his Liberty, and spent four Years in the farther work of his Ministry: and can we suppose that he made no New Converts, made his first Visit to no Nation during all that time? It is scarcely probable; and the Ancients generally believed, on the contrary, that he Then first propagated the Christian Faith in the Island of *Crete*, if not in *Spain* and other Western Parts of *Europe*. The other Observation is drawn from what St. *John* says in *Revel. xiv. 6.* *I saw another Angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel, to preach unto them that dwell on the Earth, to every Nation and Kindred, and Tongue and People.* If the Angel was Then to *preach it to them*, it seems that it was not done, when he wrote his *Revelations*, and therefore when all the Apostles (except Himself) were

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dead,

dead, and most probably after the *End* of the Jewish State was *come*.

2. It may be consider'd further, that the Nature of the thing and its Circumstances make strongly against this Notion: It is highly Improbable, that even Inspired and Gifted Men, as the Apostles were, could do so much Work Well in so short a time: But (what is more) if all Parts of the World without Restriction, even this newly discovered Country of *America*, had the Light of the Gospel Then convey'd to them, so many Difficulties will follow this Assertion, as would make a wise Man very backward in maintaining it; For how could the Apostles get thither? By Sea or by Land? Either way there was Then no known Intercourse between the Old and the New World:--- But what is not possible to Men, who carry Miracles in their Hands? It is true, that many Ways may be suppos'd, which a Divine Power could make Practicable and Easy: but (to omit all other Questions) it may be asked, Why, when the Apostles had by a supernatural Assistance found out this Unknown World, and had once preached the Christian Faith among those

those Infidels, they did not upon their Return discover this their Discovery? Why did they make a Secret of their Journey, and thereby for Ages together, and (as far as perhaps they knew) for ever cut off from them all farther Assistance of the Churches, which they founded in the Old World? If they had been careful to make a Report of what they had seen, and had pointed out the situation of the Country, other Christians might have followed them to carry on their happy beginnings, and a Union of Faith might have been maintain'd by means of this seasonable Correspondence: But I shall pursue this Reflection no farther, it speaks sufficiently of it self: and therefore both from Scripture and the Nature of the thing it may be concluded, that tho' much was done by the Apostles, yet much was left by them Undone, and still remains so, towards Accomplishing the Prophecies of the Old Testament, and carrying the Knowledge of the Gospel throughout all the World.

Tho',

Tho', after all, let it be thought never so Certain, that the Name of *Christ* has been actually preached to every *Kingdom* and to every *Creature under Heaven*; yet it will remain a Truth, that the Design of Providence has not been hitherto effected; because the Prophecies foretell that the Gospel is not only to be preached, but to be receiv'd and believed every where; *the Earth is to be full of the Knowledge of the Lord*, and *Incense with a pure Offering is to Offer'd up to him in every Place*.

I come therefore to the

III. THIRD and last head, which is indeed a Consequence of the two former, *viz.* that since we know what the Design of GOD is, and that it has not yet been accomplished, it is every Christian's Duty to forward the Work, and contribute towards it according to his Ability. The Consequence St. *Paul* himself has drawn, when he said, *Lo! we turn to the Gentiles, for thus hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a Light*

Acts xiii.
46, 47.

for Propagation of the Gospel, &c. 23

Light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for Salvation unto the end of the Earth: where you may observe, that he calls the Prediction a *Command* to him and other Christians, that they should do what they could for the accomplishment of it: And if it have the Force of a *Command* from GOD, it must be the Duty of a Christian to perform it; for what is our Duty, but to do what we know to be the Will of GOD? When the Designs of Heaven are reveal'd, and the Matter of them is such as Human means can concur and assist in, how can our Obedience be shewn, unless we are willing and ready to forward the Work?

BESIDES, to spread the Knowledge of the Gospel, is to promote the Glory and Honour of GOD; and surely our Love of his Service is a very Cool one, if, when we know that the bringing Idolaters into the True Worship of him, is the greatest Honour that we can do him, we are backward in that Point, and will contribute nothing towards the enlargement of his spiritual Empire.

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OR if we consider the Benefits, which a Nation converted to the true Knowledge receives, what a Warmth of Zeal should we have to do such a Good as This to our Fellow Creatures? Christianity is not meerly a new Mode and Fashion of Divine Worship taken up in the Room of others now antiquated and worn out by length of Time: It is not only a better System of Morals, setting the distinction of Virtue and Vice upon more solid Foundations, and giving more certain Hopes and Fears of what is to come: All this Natural Religion (not corrupted and perverted) might have done; but all this is far short of what Christianity proposes to its Followers: It is a New Law or Covenant pointing out a method to Sinners, whereby their Repentance may become effectual for Pardon with God: The Burthen of the Gospel is *Salvation to all men upon their Repentance, provided it be join'd with Faith in Jesus Christ*; hence flow the Promises of Eternal Life, which are now held out to Mankind upon This and no other Condition: And can we have the Feelings of a Man, and not labour that every one who has the same Nature

Nature with our selves should be partakers of the same Immortal Happiness? In a word, can we think our selves good Christians, unless we are ready to assist towards the Accomplishment of that Design, which to our Fellow Creatures is the Salvation of their Souls, and to our GOD the Increase of his Glory?

BUT all this is said only upon supposition, that a Door is open'd, and a High-Way made straight for our Propagating the Christian Faith; and this naturally leads our Thoughts to the Business of the Honourable Society here assembled this Day.

IT is well known to be a Body of men incorporated by Royal Charter, not only to supply our Colonies and Settlements on the *American* Continent with Able and Orthodox Pastors; but to propagate and spread the Knowledge of the Gospel, where it never has been heard of; among the *Negroes* in possession of our own Countrymen, and among the *Indians* who live in their Neighbourhood.

How Faithfully and Prudently the Fund is manag'd by the Worthy Members of this Society; and how great their

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Care

Care is to look after every Branch of the Mission, may be known from the Accounts yearly publish'd by their Order: where you may see, that the Good Work goes on, tho' not so fast as the warmest Christian's Zeal would make him wish, yet with such Success as would make the Coolest Christian not faint and be weary of his *well-doing*.

It is observable, that this so lately discover'd World lies in the very Route and Road, which Christianity seems to have all along taken: in the East, we know, it first appear'd; and, as it spread it self, it shap'd its Course with that of the Sun, the Emblem of its Light and Glory: to the Westward it travell'd, and in length of time took possession of those *European* Countries, which are now called *Christendom*; and ever since this more Western Tract of *America* has been known, it has continued by degrees to gain ground, and enlarge its limits on that spacious Continent: which seems to be no obscure Indication that the Designs of Providence and of this Society go on together, and that in the Decrees of Heaven this new Way was not open'd for the sake of that Temporal

poral Profit which the *European* Nations *have* made of it, but for the Spiritual Advantage which its Inhabitants *may* make of it.

BUT it may be asked, How we know that This is the Time for the Conversion of the *Americans*? The Precise Time indeed we know not; but then we can't tell, but that this *may* be the Time appointed of God: all the Circumstances seem to favour it; and whatever the Event may be, yet we are sure of this, that we are labouring to bring about the Designs of Heaven; we know that this *Time* will come, and, for ought we know, *this day of the Lord* may be now at hand. — But why should we set up for the Instruments of it, when we have received no Command? why should we run before we are sent? Because no Christian can doubt of this, that tho' his Work may be without success among those Infidels, to Himself it cannot fail of a Reward. We are not now a days to sit still, till a Revelation be brought to us; GOD has for many Ages past made use of the Voluntary, or at least the seemingly Voluntary service of Men; and This, with his Blessing upon it,

has in Fact prov'd sufficient for the Conversion of many Nations, our Own here in particular ; why Then may it not for the Conversion of These ?

BUT where are the Miracles of our Missionaries, their Credentials, the Proofs of their Veracity? It is true indeed, that such as go out from among us for this Work, are not Gifted, as the Apostles and first Christians were: but then neither does God nor Man expect such a Glaring and surprizing Success from them: If they have no Miracles to accompany them, yet they may with *John the Baptist* (who was likewise without that Power) *prepare the way* for the Reception of the Gospel: And Miracles perhaps are not so much wanted now, as they once were in the Infancy of the Gospel; for we have many strong Arguments to offer, much Evidence to produce in favour of Christianity, which the first Age had not, and could not have. But is it Certain, that there are no Miracles wrought, where none are wrought to the Senses? tho' God may not work Miracles by the Hands of those who Teach, He may upon the Hearts of those who Hear: the Conviction of these
may

may be the Effect of a Divine Power, tho' not any Outward Evidence of it: and in this Silent and less Pompous way of opening the Understanding, and inclining the Will to know and practise the Doctrine, G O D may perhaps still work Miracles, and effectually enable those to be Powerful Preachers, who as to any visible Gifts of the Holy Spirit come Empty-handed.

I F it be still farther objected, That we have Infidels enough among us Here, to employ all our Pains about for their Conversion; and that, like Able Generals, we should first make sure of all at Home, before we attempt to carry our Conquests into Foreign Countries: we must answer, that there is too much Truth in what is asserted, but no good Consequence in what is drawn from it; because the One Work may well go on consistently with the Other; All that we pretend to do Abroad, is what we always have done at Home; lay the Evidence for our Faith before Unbelievers in the strongest and fullest Light we can; if they will not be convinc'd by our Reasonings, we have no other methods to try; the Arts of Deceiving

30 *A Sermon before the Society*

ving we have no Need of, and the Use of Force and Violence we abhor.

BUT still the Generality of Men may ask, How They can further this Design of Providence, who are not furnished with Knowledge either to Teach, or to choose out proper Teachers? Yet all may assist and take a share in the Work, by contributing towards the Support of it, and gladly throwing something into the Stock, which the Society is impower'd to manage, and out of which the great Expences are defray'd. Much help is still wanting, large supplies are still Necessary; the Undertaking being so Great, and the Progress made in it so small in comparison of what remains Undone: And what can You do Better, you that love to do Good? where can your Bounty be better plac'd, either in regard to the End propos'd, or the Means made use of? It is only by the Assistance of the Rich and the Charitable that the sphere of the Society's Care can be enlarg'd, and that Men of more Virtue and Piety, of more Learning and Prudence can be encouraged to go on the Mission, when they see that such a Liberal Provision is made for their

their Residence in those Countries, as may weigh against the Inclination, which all naturally have to settle, where they took their Birth and have their Acquaintance.

IN the Name then of all the Members of this Worthy and Venerable Society, and as their Representative on this Occasion, I call upon and invite all good Christians to take the Interests of it to heart, and to lend their Charitable (where they are Able, their Bountiful) hand towards its Support. All the common Topicks, us'd for the perswading Men to do Good to their Fellow Creatures, are so strong in this Case, that they seem made for it, I had almost said, appropriated to it: But I forbear to insist upon them at present; That has been already done by so many, that have gone before me, with so much Copiousness, as shews that the Motives to *Charity* are a Subject, which, like *Charity* it self, *never faileth*. — But your Patience may.

LET us therefore conclude with returning our hearty thanks to GOD for the Benefactions towards this Work, which we have received the last Year; and
with

with beseeching him to continue to put it into the Hearts of the Wealthy, that they would send in their Free-will Offerings, and that we may be thereby strengthen'd to enlarge the Kingdom of his Son Jesus; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all Glory and Honour ascrib'd in every Nation under Heaven.

F I N I S.



